

A₁ rollers being located such that they allow some bending of the pipeline as it passes through the lower guide arrangement.

A₂ 3. (Amended) A vessel according to claim 1, in which the guide rollers of at least one set of rollers extend at least one quarter of a revolution around the path of the pipeline.

A₃ 5. (Amended) A vessel according to claim 1, in which the lower guide arrangement is of substantially trumpet shape flaring outwardly in the direction of travel of the pipeline during laying, and the angle of flare increasing in the direction of travel of the pipeline during laying.

6. (Amended) A vessel according to claim 1, in which the guide rollers are freely rotatable.

7. (Amended) A vessel according to claim 1, in which at least some of the rollers are mounted for rotation in bearings that are directly or indirectly resiliently displaceable.

A₄ 10. (Amended) A vessel according to claim 7, in which the bearings are resiliently displaceable by a distance of more than 50 mm.

A₅ 12. (Amended) A vessel according to claim 1, in which the inclination of the tower assembly is adjustable and the lower guide arrangement is secured to the tower assembly.

13. (Amended) A vessel according to claim 1, in which the inclination of the tower assembly is fixed.

14. (Amended) A vessel according to claim 1, in which the inclination of the tower assembly is in the range of 45° to 90° to the horizontal.

15. (Amended) A vessel according to claim 1, in which three or more sets of guide rollers are positioned along the path of the pipeline below sea level.

17. (Amended) A vessel according to claim 15, in which the sets of rollers are spaced apart substantially evenly along the path of the pipeline.

18. (Amended) A vessel according to claim 1, in which the spacing along the path of the pipeline between adjacent sets of guide rollers is in the range of 2 m to 15 m.

19. (Amended) A vessel according to claim 1, including means for monitoring forces applied to the pipeline by rollers of the lower guide arrangement.

A₇ 21. (Amended) A vessel according to claim 1, including means for raising lengths of pipe from a deck of the vessel to a position aligned with the tower assembly and for joining such lengths of pipe to the pipeline being laid.

A₈ 23. (Amended) A method according to claim 22, employing a vessel as defined in claim 1.

24. (Amended) A method according to claim 22, further comprising monitoring forces exerted on the pipeline by one or more of the guide rollers and adjusting the operation of the vessel in dependence upon the monitoring.

Please add new claim 25 as follows:

A₉ --25. (New) A method according to claim 23, further comprising monitoring forces exerted on the pipeline by one or more of the guide rollers and adjusting the operation of the vessel in dependence upon the monitoring.--